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# THE BLUE GROTTO

AND

# ITS LITERATURE.

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## I.

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# THE BLUE GROTTO AND ITS LITERATURE.

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THE facts as regards the discovery of the Blue Grotto—a discovery that may be said to have changed the face of the island of Capri\* and the character of its population—seem to be the following:—

1. The Grotto is not the one described by Capaccio and other early writers as the *Grotta oscura*. The reasons for this statement will be given below.

2. It was known to the islanders before the excursion of Kopisch and his friends on the 17th August, 1826. He himself expressly admits this. Whether Angelo Ferraro actually entered it previously to Kopisch is disputed. *A priori*, there is every probability that not only he, but generations of fishers before him, had done so. There are caves on Capri more difficult of access than the *Grotta azzurra* then was,† and yet fishermen visit them from time to time under favourable conditions of wind and water. Such is, for instance, a small grotto that reproduces the peculiar light-effect of the *Grotta azzurra*, and whose external entrance lies a few yards to the

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\* One of its most unexpected effects was the simultaneous apparition of the Red, White and Green Grottoes previously known by their older and more poetical designations.

† Kopisch records that he entered the Blue Grotto, on his second visit, in a boat.



east of the White Grotto. It communicates with the interior lake of that grotto. Every nook of the shore has probably been searched by these poor folk from time immemorial, and it appears incredible that "superstitious dread" should prevent them, during long centuries, from entering this one particular cave. A northern poet may well be enraptured of the wonderful colour-effects of the interior; but a fisherman of Capri would be no more disposed to think or talk about them than of the thousand other natural beauties that surround him, and that he views with indifference. Angelo Ferraro and his progenitors may well have known the Blue Grotto, but they *discovered* it only in the sense in which the Red Indians may be said to have discovered Niagara.

3. Then follows the memorable visit of Kopisch and Fries, of which, besides the still existing autograph record in Pagano's Hotel, there was preserved, up till a few years ago, an account contained in a private letter from Fries to a member of his family. This letter has lately been destroyed. Ernst Fries, a pupil of Rottmann, and a better painter than his friend Kopisch, died in Karlsruhe young and under tragical circumstances. A picture of his, of the Piccola Marina at Capri, hangs in the Art gallery of that town, and a pencil sketch of this picture, in the same gallery, is interesting, because it is signed and bears the date of 18 August, 1826—the day after the discovery of the Blue Grotto.\* Bernhard Fries, Ernst's brother, who was with him on the island, painted, amongst other views of Capri, a small picture of the interior of the Blue Grotto. This sketch, now in private hands in Karlsruhe, is probably the earliest pictorial representation of the Grotto, unless that mentioned in

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\* It may be worth recording, for those interested in the iconography of the island, that a picture by Kummer (presumably at Dresden) represents the Piccola Marina from almost the identical point of view. It was acquired by the Saxon Kunstverein in 1834, and prints of it have been made by Professor Hammer. It gives some idea of the then-existing English fort at that point.

Kopisch's "Entdeckung der Blauen Grotte," can be traced. The letters of Kopisch to his mother, describing his discovery, are not included in Boetticher's (1856) large collection of his works, but have been published, together with other interesting new material, by Dr. Otto Jessen in the German periodical *Der Buer* (Berlin, xx. Jahrgang, numbers 33 to 41). The two letters referring to the Blue Grotto (in Nos. 35 and 36) are more vivacious than the well-known pamphlet, of which they formed the basis.

4. The fame of the new Grotto spread slowly at first, and was probably confined to the circle that could read the visitors' book at Pagano's Hotel, or came in contact with Pagano himself, who had taken part in the first excursion. There is no mention of it in the writings of the poet Platen, although he knew Capri well, and was personally acquainted with Kopisch, whom he praises as an expert swimmer.\* Waiblinger, who wrote an insipid fairy tale of the Blue Grotto, apparently never entered it. He records† that at this time it was still practically inaccessible. In an interesting manuscript dated 23 November, 1828, and to be referred to hereafter, the antiquarian Feola, treating of the coast line of Capri, devotes some space to a description of the steps that lead down to the sea beside the Blue Grotto, but not a word to the newly-discovered wonder lying at their foot. Still more significant is the fact that the manuscript of Mangoni's "*Ricerche Topografiche*," dated Capri, February, 1831, contains not a single reference to the Blue Grotto.‡ In the manuscript of his "*Ricerche Archeologiche*," dated Castellamare, August, 1831, two pages are

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\* Platen's "Gesammelte Werke," Leipzig, 1853, Vol. VII, p. 51. There are only a few words on Capri in the two volumes of Platen's diaries recently published. (Cotta, 1896 and 1900.) In the earlier volume (Cotta, 1860) there is no reference.

† "Briefe aus Capri," 1828.

‡ These manuscripts have been kindly lent me by Count Antonio Mangoni.

given up to the Blue Grotto, but unfortunately, with that incurious spirit that detracts from the value of this otherwise useful book, nothing is said regarding its discovery, nor does it contain the full account of the exploration of the interior passage given in the published work. Valery\* had heard of it, but apparently did not deem it worthy of a visit. Raoul-Rochette† does not mention it at all.

5. The interest displayed in the Blue Grotto gradually led to increased facilities of access by a widening of the orifice and the employment of a larger number of suitable boats. This may have been about 1830. Among the earlier printed accounts of the Grotto may be mentioned that contained in a letter of the composer Mendelssohn to his sisters of 28 May, 1831,‡ Mouravieff's§ fantastic effusion, and the tedious description in Marianna Starke,\* who writes for the benefit of persons desirous of visiting this "sapphire cell." By 1836 a considerable number of writers of all nationalities had sung its praises, and various reproductions of the interior, such as that contained in Audot's "*Italie*" (1834), and Alvino and Quaranta's "*Antiche ruine di Capri*" (1835), had been published. Perhaps the once widely-read "*Improvisator*" of H. C. Andersen ¶ did more than any other work to establish its claim as a world-wonder.

\* "*Voyages historiques et littéraires en Italie.*" Paris, 1831-1833. Vol. III., p. 104.

† "*L'Île de Capri.*" Paris, 1834, Rignoux. This rare work has little to commend it save a certain literary charm. It is particularly disappointing to the archæologist, who expects more from the celebrated author.

‡ "*Reisebriefe von Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy.*" Leipzig, 1862, p. 151.

§ "*Lettre à Monseigneur Capace-Latro.*" Naples, 1832, page 17. This writer deserves credit for praising the archæologist Feola, whose merits during life and after death have been inadequately appreciated.

\* "*Travels in Europe, etc.*" Eighth edition, 1833. The Blue Grotto may perhaps be mentioned in an earlier edition.

¶ Published in 1835. He fixes 1831 as the date of the discovery—so soon had the matter become involved in obscurity! The "two Englishmen" who figure here and elsewhere as the discoverers are Kopisch and Fries.

6. The growing reputation of the Blue Grotto, and the many contradictory accounts of its discovery, doubtless led Kopisch, in 1838, to print his "*Entdeckung der Blauen Grotte*" (since republished). It is therefore erroneous to state, as has been done, that the fame of the Blue Grotto is the result of this publication. It was, rather, the cause of it.

7. At the departure of Kopisch from Capri in 1829, Angelo Ferraro woke up to find himself famous. There was no one on the spot interested in contesting his claim, and it is hardly to be expected that he refused to accept the honour forced upon him. A variety of writers, reproducing the local gossip, or copying from one another, support his contention. The Neapolitan "*Poliorama Pittoresco*" gives a portrait of him,\* and fixes the date of his discovery of the Blue Grotto for the 16th May, 1822. This account is copied by Chevalley de Rivaz † by Quattromani, ‡ and by the anonymous author of a worthless outpouring entitled "*La Grotta Azzurra dell' Isola di Capri*," and published in 1850. No reasons are assigned by any of these authors for fixing this particular date. A. Dumas père similarly writes: "Pendant que nous réglions nos comptes avec nos bateliers, Pietro nous montra un homme couché au grand soleil et étendu la face contre la sable; c'était le pecheur qui, neuf ou dix ans auparavant, avait découvert la Grotte d'Azur, en cherchant des fruits de mer le long des rochers. Il était venu aussitôt faire part de sa découverte aux autorités

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\* In an article entitled *Angelo Ferraro detto il Riccio*, by V. Morgigni Novella. *Poliorama Pittoresco*: Anno sesto, Semestre primo. 1841-1842, page 115. There is an article in the same paper (*Sulla Grotta Azzurra dell' Isola di Capri*. *Poliorama Pittoresco*: Anno secondo, Semestre primo. 1837-1838, page 97) which contains a picture of the Blue Grotto, but, curiously enough, no statement as to its discovery. This article is by Giacomo Maria Paci.

† *Voyage de Naples à Capri et à Pastum*. Naples, 1846, p. 18.

‡ On page 189 of the *Album Scientifico-Artistico-Letterario*. Napoli, 1845. This collection has become scarce. It contains an article on the Italian sources of Milton's "*Paradise Lost*" that would be worth translating.

de l'île," etc., etc.\* More recently, the claim of Angelo Ferraro has been upheld by Pietro Martorana,† who uses almost the same words as Dumas, though he gives Kopisch the credit of swimming into the grotto "guided by the fishermen"; and by Eugenio Mele.‡ I may mention that the Municipal archives of Capri for 1822 and 1826, so far as I have been enabled to examine them, contain no reference to the Blue Grotto or to any such arrangement as Angelo Ferraro is said by the writers above-named to have made with the local authorities upon his discovery. Far from living in ease and affluence, as Dumas describes him, the only official record that I have been able to obtain [see Appendix A] shows him to have been a poor man, founding his claim to charity upon the benefits that his discovery conferred upon the island.

8. On the other hand, nearly all serious writers, since 1826, have correctly attributed the discovery of the Blue Grotto to Kopisch, and amongst their number may be noted here only the Marchese di San Tommaso, because his little pamphlet has been overlooked by bibliographers,§ and because the early date of his

\* A. Dumas. *Le Speronare*. Tome I., page 43. Edition de 1855. Paris, Michel Levy. I can recollect no reference to the Blue Grotto in Dumas' *Corricolo* as has been stated (A. Badin, "*Grottes et Cavernes*," Paris, 1886), nor yet in the works of Chateaubriand, as is elsewhere said (Classens de Jongste: "*Souvenirs d'une promenade au Mont Vésuve*," Naples, 1841, p. 27).

† *Notizie biografiche e bibliografiche degli scrittori del d'aletto Napolitano*. Napoli, 1874, page 442.

‡ *Napoli Nobilissima*. Rivista di Topografia ed Arte Napolitana. Napoli, 1897, Vol. VI., page 12.

§ "*La Grotta Azzurra*": in *Prose Scelte*, Milan, 1840. To certain earlier neglected scientific publications on this subject, by Giuseppe Belli and Maiocchi, I hope to recur elsewhere. The non-scientific literature of the Blue Grotto is extensive. Writers, in various languages have made it the scene of romantic episodes, though one author demonstrates his independence by selecting the Green Grotto for this purpose. In reading Mrs. Shelley's account of it ("*Rambles in Germany and Italy*," London, Moxon, 1844), one involuntarily thinks of the exquisite imaginings to which it would have inspired her husband. As a corrective to such high ideals it may be well to read the tintinnabulary rhapsody of Cesira Pozzolini-Siciliani ("*Capri e la Grotta Azzurra*") in, I know not which recent number of the "*Nuova Antologia*," or glance into the lately published romantic opera, in seven Tableaux, with Intermezzo: "*Die Blue Grotte*," by P. E. Lorenz.



visit to the Blue Grotto—1832—renders his testimony all the more valuable.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

Soon after 1826 attention was drawn to accounts by older writers of a *Grotta oscura* in Capri. This is generally presumed to be the modern Blue Grotto, long forgotten, but rediscovered and newly christened by Kopisch.\*

Among other authorities, Capaccio † was quoted, who, with reference to a passage of Tacitus on the Capri residence of the Emperor Tiberius, says: “Addit praeterea [Tacitus—he means Suetonius] duodecim ibi fuisse villas et multae libidinis speluncas, . . . . . Inter speluncas, una reliqua est, quam ingressu valde obscuram cernes, in lucidum deinde sinum desinit, in quem superne aquarum stillicidiis, mare nimis delectabile redditur.” The traveller Sandys, who did not touch at Capri, but could not resist the temptation of giving a précis of Capaccio’s account of it, thus translates this passage: “Amongst other Grots here is one that hath an entrance very obscure, but leads into a lightsom cave, exceeding pleasant by reason of the water dropping down from on high.” ‡

In the manuscript of Fabio Giordano, to which I hope to recur elsewhere, and from which Capaccio has been accused (Nicolo Toppi: *Biblioteca Napolitana*, 1678; pages 79 and 166) of copying the whole of his history, occurs an early reference to this cave: “. . . . Faraglioni appellati, a quibus longe [?] sub ipsa fere turri [the Certosa Tower] specus rupibus subiacens

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\* The merit, such as it is, of starting this confusion belongs, I think, to Waiblinger. Chevalley de Rivaz and Stanislaus d’Aloe also refer to older authors. The latter writes (*Naples: ses Monuments et ses Curiosités*: Naples, 1847): “Our friend, Mr. Kopisch, rediscovered the Blue Grotto, mentioned by the historian Capaccio.”

† *Historia Neapolitana*. 1607, p. 545. This work has been republished in the collections of Burman and of Gravier.

‡ G. Sandys. “*Narrative of a Journey in 1610, etc.*” London, 1615. There are later editions.

. . . . *intus aquas irrupta, muro quodam a natura artefice confecta. Namque in mari angustus introitus [?] si aditus pandit et quadum altitudine ut vix piscatorias cumbas admittat. Ubi per sex fere passus introprocesseris (ire) undique sublimitatis antrum apparet rotunda fere figura unius stadii ambitu nulloque solari lumine illustratum.*"

Another writer, frequently quoted, is D. A. Parrino,\* a cantankerous and inaccurate scribbler, who (speaking, like Capaccio, of the Grottos of Tiberius) writes: "Delle spelonche una ve ne resta, che ha l'entrata molto oscura, ma in un lucido seno per la riflessione dell'acqua termina molto dilettevole." The whole context of this, and innumerable other passages, shows that Parrino merely copied Capaccio's account. Indeed, from the wording of the title, it is clear that he does not profess to give original matter, But either he misunderstood Capaccio's good latinity, or, endeavouring to be briefer, became obscure in his expression, and this has led MacKowen† to the erroneous conclusion that Parrino actually visited Capri, "for he ascribed with more truth [than Capaccio] the beautiful effect produced to reflection." Parrino assuredly visited neither Capri nor many other of the spots he describes, or he would not have contented himself with merely giving garbled extracts from earlier and better writers.

The *Grotta oscura* is mentioned also by Montorio and Pacicchelli. They were both personally acquainted with the island, but the former, writing in 1715, ‡ must have copied from Pacicchelli's earlier work, § as the words used are almost iden-

\* "*Nuova Guida dei Forestieri, etc.*" The bibliographers Soria and Giustiniani give 1700 as the date of the first edition of this compilation. I have seen none earlier than 1703.

† "Capri" (1884). This work, which has become difficult to procure, might be worth reprinting.

‡ Serafino Montorio. "*Zodiaco di Maria Saneissina*": Napoli, 1715, p. 258.

§ G. B. Pacicchelli. "*Il Regno di Napoli in Prospettiva*," 1703, page 184. It contains a curious view of Capri. In a still earlier work ("*Memorie di Viaggi per l'Europa Cristiana*," 1685) this author gives a short account of his visit to "Capri" with another reference to the *Grotta oscura*.

tical. An excellent description of this cave, too long to be inserted here, is to be found in N. P. Giannettasio,\* whose dainty phraseology does not detract from his value as eye-witness. There is a reference, too, in Addison's travels. † "I entered one, which the inhabitants call Grotta oscura, and, after the light of the sun was a little worn off my eyes, could see all the parts of it distinctly by a glimmering reflection that played about them from the surface of the water. The mouth is low and narrow; but, after having entered pretty far in, the Grotto opens itself on both sides in an oval figure of an hundred yards from one extremity to the other, as we were told, for it would not have been safe measuring of it. The roof is vaulted, and distils fresh water from every part of it, which fell upon us as fast as the first drippings of a shower. The inhabitants and Neapolitans, who have heard of Tiberius' Grottos, will have this to be one of them, but there are several reasons which show it to be natural. For besides, the little use that we can conceive of such a dark cavern of salt waters there are nowhere any marks of the chisel; the sides are of soft mouldering stone. . . . . Not far from this Grotto lie the *Sirenum Scopuli*, which Virgil and Ovid mention in *Æneas' Voyage*; they are two or three sharp rocks that stand about a stone's throw from the South side of the Island, etc."

There can be no doubt that this cave is the same as that described by Capaccio. Addison, however, gives the significant detail that the walls were of soft mouldering stone, and locates the Grotto on the south side of the island, in the neighbourhood of the Faraglione Rocks, which he, like Capaccio, and many other writers, wrongly supposes to be the Siren's rocks whose true position is clearly laid down by the ancient geographers.

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\* "*Autumni Surrentini*." Naples, 1698, p. 35. There have been later editions.

† "*Remarks on Several Parts of Italy in the years 1701, 1702 and 1703*." Glasgow, 1755. The once widely read Misson's "*Voyage d'Italie*" incorporates Addison's text.

It is not easy to understand how these passages can be construed by careful writers like Schœner,\* Furchheim,† and R. T. Günther,‡ into a description of the modern Blue Grotto. This lies on the north, not south, of the island; its sides are not crumbling, but of hard limestone rock; its entrance is neither long nor very dark, nor is there any trace of that dripping of water to produce the magical effect that characterized the *Grotta oscura*. Besides, no mention is made by these writers of the chief peculiarities of the *Grotta Azzura*; namely, the blue colour of the water and the inconveniently low entrance.

Where, then, is the *Grotta oscura*, and why is it not visited now as formerly? A passage from a still unpublished manuscript (dated 23 November, 1828), of the archæologist G. Feola explains the matter. "This Grotto, known to us many years ago as the largest of the many that lie round about the island, has now its entrance blocked up. On enquiring as to this change, we were informed of an unexpected event of the 15th of May, 1808, whereby the overlying soil, on which was built a high and solid tower of the Carthusians at the time of the Barbary invasions that perished simultaneously, fell away and damaged the said Grotto by closing up its entrance." There is also a passage in Mangoni, apparently overlooked by the writers above named, that refers to this catastrophe. "On the eastern side of the Certosa there was built upon an eminence a tower for the defence of that monastery that was of pleasing architecture and very strong, and below it in the interior of the hill was formerly observed a very profound cave called *Grotta oscura*. This tower in our days suddenly fell in, together with

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\* R. Schœner. "*Capri*." Leipzig, 1892, page 137.

† "*Bibliografia della Isola di Capri*." Napoli, 1899, pages 20 and 21.

‡ "Geographical Journal," August, 1903, page 129. A *résumé* of these interesting articles will be found in "*Nature*," Vol. LXIX., No. 1786. They have been republished in book form by J. B. Nichols & Sons, Parliament Mansions, Westminster, 1903.

the little hill on which it was built, so that nowadays one can hardly show its site." \*

This will suffice to dispose of the claims of Capaccio and others to a knowledge of the Blue Grotto.

The classical *Grotta oscura*, then, has perished, and this explains the fact that not one of the travellers of various nationalities† who have left records of their visits to Capri after 1808 speak of a marvellous grotto until the new *Grotta Azzurra* became known. Hadrawa ‡ already records that in his day the proper entrance had been blocked up by stones falling down, and whoever examines the cliff from above will not hesitate to predict that a new landslide may occur at any moment. The overlying hill was doubtless saturated with springs percolating through the soft stone into the cave below, and preparing the catastrophe that deprived Capri of two of its attractions simultaneously. A small sea-cave east of this landslide, and at the point where the drainage of Capri enters the sea, is now pointed out by sailors as the *Grotta oscura*. But this is merely a reminiscence, for the rock is hard and has suffered no change for many hundred years. For the rest, both the Tower and the *Grotta oscura* had played their part. The days were at hand when the Corsairs ceased to threaten Capri, and when a rival grotto was to be discovered that would have eclipsed the

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\* R. Mangoni, "*Ricerche topografiche ed archeologiche sull' Isola di Capri*." Naples, 1834, page 46. This now vanished hill is the Monticello of certain early writers: the eminence to the West of the Certosa is properly called Montagnuolo.

† See, for instance, the accounts of Capri in Comte Turpin de Crisse (*Souvenirs du Golfe de Naples recueillis en 1808, 1818 et 1824*: Paris, 1828), or in the Travels of Count Stolberg (*Gesammelte Werke*: Hamburg, 1827), or in Sir R. C. Hoare's *Classical Tour through Italy and Sicily*. (London, 1819).

‡ "Freundschaftliche Briefe," etc., page 69. Dresden, 1794. Besides the Italian edition of 1793, there is another one in that language published in Dresden, 1794. The text is identical with that of 1793, but the volume resembles the German edition in size except that, the printing being in smaller type, there are only 97 pages instead of 144. Some of the vignettes of medals, etc., are differently placed, or reversed.



beauties of the old. New institutions, new attractions, had made them superfluous—they were swept away at a singularly appropriate moment, and no trace of them remains save the still fresh scar on the landscape that attract the mariner's eye as he sails past under the shadow of *l'Unghia marina*. A curious coincidence, not devoid of a certain sentimental element.

Both Hadrawa and G. M. Secondo \* speak of Roman masonry in and about the *Grotta oscura*. This may corroborate the legend of Tiberius connected with it. But it is noteworthy, as showing the workings of the mythopoeic faculty, that Tiberius, excluded from the old Grotto, immediately took possession of the new one. It is in the *Grotta Azzurra*, as every modern Capriote knows, that the decrepit monarch was wont to frolic with the fair nymphs of his harem and the other company mentioned by Suetonius. Gregorovius has been gravely censured by a German writer for reproducing this and other legends as serious history.† Gregorovius the philosopher can be as scholarly

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\* Secondo's "*Relazione Storica*" is also contained in the second volume of the "*Symbolæ*" of the archæologist A. F. Gori (1752). In the preface to this volume Gori gives as a reason for reprinting this work that the whole edition (1750) had been handed over by the author to King Charles of Naples, and that copies had become extremely rare in consequence. Gori's reprint contains a supplementary note on the Hypatus inscription, for which he proposes some new readings, but is otherwise identical with Secondo's text. This work is also used as the basis for the description of Capri in various Italian compilations, for example, in Vol. XXIII. (page 361) of Salmon's [Carlo Gagliardi] "*Stato presente di tutti i paesi e popoli del Mondo*." (Naples, 1763. There is another edition, Venice, 1761, that contains the account of Capri on page 500). Among English writers whose descriptions of Capri show that they have perused, with profit, this excellent little pamphlet, may be mentioned C. Kelsall, or Kellsall (*Classical Excursion from Rome to Arpino*: London and Geneva, 1820, 1821 and 1822), and the author [Rowlandson] of "*Naples and the Campagna Felice*" (R. Ackermann, 101. Strand, W.C., 1815). The 1808 edition of Secondo lacks the dedication to the King, the occasional use of the word "Sire," and a few lines at the end, but is otherwise identical with that of 1750.

† It is somewhat surprising to find Gregorovius, in his work on the Emperor Hadrian, referring to the sacrifice of Hypatus by Tiberius as an established fact.

as most of his countrymen, but at times he is pleased to throw the poetic mantle over his shoulders. *Si sic omnes!*

This tradition, however, like most of the memories of Tiberius on Capri, is not one at all in the true sense of the word. The various legends connected with the Roman Emperor that now form part of the mental equipment of the intelligent islanders, and constitute a profitable source of revenue, are not, as is generally supposed,\* inherent in the race, but were probably only grafted upon them by the Cicerones of the Grand Tours and earlier days, who understood the value of quoting classical authorities to the curious visitor, and of showing sites, such as the Salto di Tiberio or the Sellarie, that might accord with the received accounts of the Emperor's residence on Capri. A great deal of absurd archæology has been invented in this manner and infects the most recent literature of the island. I would hazard the statement that for more than a thousand years every reminiscence of Tiberius had faded out of the popular mind.

The very notion of Tiberius disporting himself in sea-caves rests upon an erroneous interpretation of classic passages; for although many sea-caves in Capri—such as Grotto Forca, Arsenale, and Bianca—show traces of having been known to the ancients, yet the passages plainly refer to land caves, † of which several (like the Grotta Castiglione, Matermania and Arco) still exhibit traces of Roman masonry.

They who still doubt the existence of antique masonry in the Blue Grotto will find it on breaking through the covering

\* See Gaetano Amalfi: "*Tiberio a Capri secondo la tradizione popolare*" (Trani, 1893), and another pamphlet that I only know in its Spanish translation: R. Schoener, "*Recorts de Tiberi a Capri*," Barcelona, 1876. Both authors assume an uninterrupted succession of tradition from Tiberius to our day, such as may well have subsisted up to the age of Suetonius.

† There is a doubtful reference in the 3rd tetrastych of Ausonius:—

*Frustra dehinc solo Caprearum clausus in antro*

*Quæ prodit vitiis, credit operta locis.*

As if Tiberius had need of hiding himself! *Capreas se contulit*, says Suetonius. But note the Tacitean touch: *Capreas se in insulam abdidit*. G. M. Secondo deserves praise for being among the first (with Voltaire) to discredit this view of Tiberius.

of stalagmitic deposit at the entrance of the mysterious labyrinthine passage that has been explored by Kopisch, Alvino, \* and many others. This tunnel lies at a considerable height above water level of Roman times and there are no traces of any access to it. In the Middle Ages it must have been filled with water. Its end is now blocked up, and there runs a tradition, improbable for more than one reason, that it was purposely destroyed by the Anacapriotes during the Corsair invasions. There may have been an intention of enlarging a natural cavity and utilising it as means of approach to the Roman villa immediately overhead (*i.e.*, not Damecuta) but, if so, and if the masonry still existing cannot be otherwise explained, the work was evidently abandoned—like some other structures in Capri—in a very incomplete stage, and, apart from every other reason, the passage, as it exists now, does not rise upwards sufficiently to warrant the belief that it was ever actually in use as a means of communication with that villa.

Attention may be drawn to another fact indicating a knowledge on the part of the ancients of the Blue Grotto. The name Gradelle, which applies to the steps leading down the cliff outside the Grotto, is not to be confounded with Gradolo—it is more correctly printed *Gratula* in the recent (1899) map of Giannotti—as the locality immediately overlying the Blue Grotto is called. This name of Gratula is nothing but a local corruption of the base Latin *gruptula* (*crypta*), and was doubtless given to the site on account of the grotto beneath. The designation grottola, or grottula, occurs elsewhere in this part of Italy, † and the cartographer, less concerned with etymology than with a literal transcription of the Capri dialect, has changed it into Gratula. Thus the name has survived during centuries when all memory of the thing had faded away.

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\* Francesco Alvino. "Due Giorni a Capri." Naples, 1838. He was a careful writer, as his other works prove, and it is to be regretted that his large publication on Capri was never completed.

† There is another *grottula* in Capri near Maternania.

## APPENDIX A.

[The following appeal to the Ministry of the Interior has been communicated to me through the courtesy of Signor Spadetta, of the Archivio Generale of Naples, where it can be consulted under *Ministero dell' Interno, II. Inventari, Fascio 226.*]

Consiglio Generale degli Ospizii della  
Provincia di Napoli,

26 Marzo, 1845.

ECCELLENZA,

Il marinaio Angelo Ferraro, scopritore della Grotta Azzurra in Capri, che tra le momentanee sovvenzioni ottenute da S. E. il Ministro della Polizia per aver contribuito alla celebrità della sua patria, fu abilitato al triplo turno tra gli altri marinai che conducono i curiosi di naturali fenomeni a visitare quel sito, privo ormai di vigoria per la sua età avanzata, ed inabile a trar profitto di tale abilitazione, nonchè ridotto alla estrema indigenza, ha mosso il sotto-intendente di Castellamare a promuovere a di lui favore un mensile sussidio di carlini trenta, da gravitare per carlini diciotto al mese sulla beneficenza di Capri e per gli altri carlini dodici sulla beneficenza di Anacapri.

A me sembra che meriti il nominato individuo la considerazione proposta, pel riflesso non solo che gli ottenne fin dapprima dei riguardi, e per un principio di pietà a causa della sua indigenza, ma pel motivo ancora dell' utile che la scoperta fatta dal suo coraggio ha procurato alla infelice classe dei marinai, e specialmente ai suoi compatriotti, e perchè attesa la sua età inoltrata non darà luogo per lungo tempo a questa gravezza per le due amministrazioni dinanzi dette.

Mi onoro quindi di rassegnare la proposizione alla E. V. per le superiori sul determinazioni.

Per l'Intendente Presidente,

Il Consigliere,

(Signed) CANONICO CARBONELLI.

## APPENDIX B.

To avoid a repetition of the confusion that will, presumably, hang for ever about the discovery of the Blue Grotto, it may be well at this moment to state the facts regarding the first successful attempt to reach the Stalactite Grotto that overlies the Grotta Bianca, and that only needs to be rendered more easy of access—a project for constructing an elaborate spiral stairway is at present under the consideration of the Capri Municipality—in order to become one of

the chief attractions of the island. Not being a sea cave, there has been no inducement whatever for fishermen, apart from the great danger of the undertaking, to penetrate into this cave, nor is there any recollection in the memory of the Capri population of such an ascent ever having been made, until May, 1901, when some Englishmen contrived, at considerable risk, to enter it. (A reference to this will be found in the *Geographical Journal*, August, 1903, page 131.) In the Spring of the present year it was visited by a party whose experiences are recorded in an article in the "*Illustrirte Zeitung*" \* from which the following passage may be quoted :—

"Many thousands of foreigners and fishermen had already beheld this Grotto from the sea, but none, as yet, had penetrated into it. Was it not the same with the Blue Grotto, when Kopisch found it? Every sailor knew of its entrance, but none had dared to enter, until the blond German broke the spell. With our grotto the case lies somewhat differently; many had desired to enter it, but none were able. . . ."

These articles created some little stir on the island where the previous exploit of 1901 was well known to everyone, and the Municipality, for reasons which do credit to that body, but need not be entered into here, regarding, as they do, the administration of certain local charities, caused to be drawn up before the Syndic a protest which is preserved in the municipal archives, and of which the following is a copy :—

L'anno 1903, il giorno 27 ottobre in Capri sono comparsi avanti a me sindaco del comune suddetto i Signori

Ferraro Pietro fu Raffaele,  
Vuotto Antonio di Saverio,  
Ferraro Ferdinando di Pietro,  
Aprea Salvatore di Saverio,

marinari, tutti cogniti, i quali mi hanno dichiarato essere a loro conoscenza e poter perciò attestare, che nel mese di Maggio, 1901, in compagnia di Alberino Giuseppe di Constanzo testè in America, di due Signori Forestieri che non conoscono i nomi, e del Montanaro Natale Cinque colla barca Nuova Constantina si recarono alla Grotta Bianca.

Ivi giunti il Cinque è montato sopra l'antenna † ed è entrato nella Grotta Superiore alla Grotta Bianca, seguito da uno dei due forestieri. Il forestiero rimase molto meravigliato, fece alcune fotografic della Grotta, e scrisse sopra

\* No. 3125, 21st May, 1903, page 777. An article in similar strains appeared in the "*Gartenlaube*," Zweite Beilage zu Nummer 37, 1903.

† This was not the ordinary yard of the boat, but one particularly procured for this purpose on account of its length.



una colonna di stalattiti con colori rossi il suo nome e quello di natale cinque. Più tardi l'altro Signore si recò nella Grotta con un certo Bertino Rapesta e vi fece legare una carrucola ed una grande fune per potervi ascendere più facilmente. Uno di quei signori ci ha più tardi inviato alcune fotografie che abbiamo regalato al Presidente della Congrega di Carità, Signor Trama Arcangelo. \*

Abbiamo saputo che nella primavera del corrente anno Natale Cinque si è recato nuovamente sulla Grotta in compagnia di un marito e moglie tedeschi e vi fece osservare anche i nomi che il Signore del 1901 scrisse sulla colonna di stalattite.

Durante quest'ascensione sia il Cinque che la coppia tedesca si servirono della fune che fece piazzare quel signore nel 1901. †

In fede di che il presente atto è stato firmato da tutti meno dal Ferraro Pietro che è illetterato.

(Signed)

Vuotto Antonio,  
Ferraro Ferdinando,  
Aprèa Salvatore,

(Signed)

F. Serena,  
Sindaco.

From this official document, then, it appears that the "discoverers" of 1903 were taken into the Grotto by the same individual who had accompanied the English party in 1901; that they used the identical rope which these left hanging (*and which is hanging to this day*, except that the lower portion has been cut off by passing fishermen; and that they were shown the names of the exploring party of 1901, painted in red letters in the interior of the grotto (where they can still be read)—all of which statements can be corroborated any day, with fuller details, by the persons who signed this declaration, or by those who took part in the two expeditions (Natale Cinque, ? Cappone, and Carlo Spadaro—all illiterate) and who are mentioned in the article of the "*Illustrierte Zeitung*"; an article which the impartial reader, therefore, will have some difficulty in characterising otherwise than as a somewhat disingenuous perversion of the truth.

So much for the discovery of 1903.

But I have stated the facts less with the purpose of depriving these, and all other belated discoverers, of such credit as they may think they deserve,

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\* In the dedication of these photographs, dated May, 1901, the discoverer proposed the name of *Grotta delle Stalattiti* for the new cave.

† They had brought a variety of ropes and ladders to facilitate the exploit, but, owing to the height of the cave, they were obliged to have recourse to the rope, already existing, in order to enter for the first time.

than principally in the interests of truth, and also in the hope that the Capri City Fathers may be induced to abandon their cherished plan of erecting a cast-iron abomination winding in monstrous contortions across the mouth of the Grotta Bianca, in favour of the proposal made in 1901 by one of the original discoverers of the Grotta delle Stalattiti.\* It was his intention, if death had not cut short his projects, to endeavour to construct an inconspicuous stone stairway, adequate for moderate climbers, that would combine utility with æsthetic requirements. If this proved impracticable, the only alternative, he said, would be a straight iron ladder let into the rock in the manner of a fire-escape, for, he rightly argued, that those whom giddiness prevented from ascending by this means should content themselves with viewing the many other natural curiosities of the island, rather than that the beauty of the Grotta Bianca—celebrated by the brush of Hamon and other painters—should be eternally ruined, and that another should be added to the list of artistic outrages that have lately been committed upon the scenery of Capri. If the municipal project is carried out, the wisdom of this suggestion will be seen.

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\* The late J. O. Maund, of Briggins Park, Essex. The other was Lieut. Kennedy, R.E.

N. D.













